

# TOXIC STRESS

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# Toxic Stress

**WHAT IS IT?  
WHO DOES IT IMPACT?  
WHAT CAN WE DO?**

**Exploring the Ecobiodevelopmental  
(EBD) Framework and the  
Social-Ecological Model**



# **Stress a normal part of life!**

**Help us learn**

**Prepares us to deal with more complex problems**

**Disrupts well-being (temporarily) increases cortisol;**

- **enhance immune system**
- **increase heart rate**
- **blood pressure**
- **prepares the body to respond**
- **Flight/Fright**

# Positive Stress

**You want people to respond to  
danger/conflict-**

**Fight or flight mode**

**Temporary**  
***Coping skills /Relationships begin  
the cooling down period!***

# What does positive stress look like?

- 2 year old that stumbles when they fall
  - Beginning of daycare or kindergarten
    - Big project/science fair in middle school
      - First dance
        - New job

LEARN-Motivation, Resiliency

**Long periods of time-increase  
cortisol, not good for the body....  
TOXIC!!**

**POSITIVE STRESS  
MINUS  
COPING SKILLS/BUFFER  
EQUAL  
TOXIC STRESS!!**

# **TOXIC STRESS-**

**A re-occurring negative experience that threatens the safety or security of an individual...**

- ✓ Separation from a parent
- ✓ Living in a substance exposed environment
- ✓ Domestic violence and living with abuse
- ✓ Mental illness
- ✓ Racial disparities- i.e. living in poverty
- ✓ Other Adverse childhood experiences

# DIFFERENT! POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

*Intense event that  
threatens safety or  
security of an individual*

Death, War, Natural disasters,  
Rape



# TOLERABLE STRESS

- Positive relationships help buffer stress or coping skills-

Death

Natural Disasters

Broken leg

A single major negative event does not mean there will be long-term effects!

# TOXIC STRESS OCCURS!

**Stress response does not turn off;  
Cortisol continues to elevate...**

**Impair immune functions, inhibit  
memory, shrink areas in the brain,  
and body functioning begin to  
suffer**

**Video:  
Center on Developing Child-  
Harvard University:  
Toxic stress derails  
development**

## **WHO DOES IT IMPACT?**

Child  
Mother/Child Dyad  
Mom  
Dad  
Family  
Community

# WHO DOES IT IMPACT-CHILD

- ◉ Change life course
- ◉ Experiences effect brain development
- ◉ Children most vulnerable to stress
- ◉ Internalize-leads to more stress
- ◉ Infant/care-giver dyad
- ◉ More resilient-due to simplistic thinking
- ◉ “4<sup>th</sup> trimester”
- ◉ Critical time
- ◉ Flight/Fright-not fully developed; not as many experiences
- ◉ Babies-limited language
- ◉ Different level of understanding (causation)

**Toxic Stress**

**Effects Learning!**

Video: Hard times  
“Generation Motel”

## TOXIC STRESS EFFECTS THE FAMILY DYAD

Strips away those  
natural buffers  
we find in  
relationships

# THINGS TO CONSIDER?

- ◉ Stress on these children
- ◉ Stress on the family
- ◉ What if mom, was pregnant-stress on fetus
- ◉ How many of us or perhaps someone you know..are a paycheck away from this type of stress?



# ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES LEAD TO TOXIC STRESS...RESULTS ARE

- ◉ Alcoholism/alcohol abuse
- ◉ Illicit drug use
- ◉ Depression
- ◉ Fetal death
- ◉ Partner violence
- ◉ Promiscuity
- ◉ Smoking
- ◉ Suicide Attempts
- ◉ Unintended Pregnancies
- ◉ Physical health related issues:
- ◉ Chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder
- ◉ Heart disease
- ◉ Liver disease
- ◉ STDs
- ◉ Obesity
- ◉ Risky behaviors: early experimentation by teens

From the T-ace







**Video**

**BREAK-  
STRETCH-  
THINK**

Please remain  
standing until  
instructed  
otherwise....

Thank you

# COMMUNITY ASSETS

## Resources

- ◉ Farmer's markets
- ◉ Resources
- ◉ Space/equity
- ◉ Higher income
- ◉ Investment
- ◉ Afterschool activities; equestrian, lacrosse, TV programs
- ◉ Safe neighborhoods

## Assets

- Access to food
- Education
- Equitable Housing
- Good jobs
- Business
- Social and recreational supports
- Public Safety

## Stressors

- ◉ Inadequate, highly priced
- ◉ Inadequate
- ◉ Substandard
- ◉ Wages
- ◉ Displacement/Flight
- ◉ Limited recreation
- ◉ Limited Resources

# RACISM IMPOSES ADDED HEALTH BURDEN AND STRESS

- ◉ Discrimination in housing, job, education, segregation (Yes, it still exists covertly)
- ◉ Social exclusion
- ◉ Prejudice
- ◉ Choices are limited when resources are not plentiful-not just about self-discipline
  - ◉ Bank practices, poverty tax (buying a car)
- ◉ Crab in the bucket vs boot to the face

# TOXIC STRESS FROM SOCIAL CAUSES LEAD TO BAD HEALTH

- ◉ Distribution of resources
- ◉ Poverty-poor nutrition
- ◉ Chronic health conditions-Diabetes
- ◉ Asthma
- ◉ Chronic Stress-worry violence, work, schools, unpaid bills, housing...etc
- ◉ Deprivation
- ◉ Those who “have”- live longer, healthier lives
- ◉ Government commodities...  
“Assistance”
- ◉ Pollutants
- ◉ Cyclical/generational

Toxic Stress

Kills!!!

# TOXIC STRESS CAN KILL ANYONE!

- ◉ Statistics indicate-racism/disadvantaged more highly effected
- ◉ Toxic stress itself does not discriminate
- ◉ Psychology Today-show disturbingly high rates of substance use, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, cheating, and stealing among affluent-teens en route to the most prestigious universities and well-paying, high-status careers in America.
  - ▣ **Resources**-schools distinguished by rich academic curricula, high standardized test scores, and diverse extracurricular opportunities. Parents' annual income, at \$150,000 and more, is well over twice the national average.
- ◉ **Display similar adverse children effects/risky behaviors**

**Video: Unnatural  
causes...is inequality  
making us sick?**

**PLACE  
MATTERS!**

**Stressors of  
living in  
disadvantaged  
communities....**

# PLACE MATTERS

- ◉ Mexican immigrants-poorer-healthier than the average American
- ◉ Lower rates of death, heart disease, cancer
- ◉ Despite less education, earnings, and the stress of a new country/language, etc. (Latino Paradox)
- ◉ After 5 years in the US-1.5 times more likely to have high blood pressure, obese, although socioeconomic standards may improve!
- ◉ One generation!

## UNITED STATES VS. OTHER COUNTRIES

- ◉ Sweden's child poverty rate is @ 4% vs. U.S. 21%
- ◉ Sweden ensures every child, no matter of socioeconomic status, has access to quality education (including college) and health care
- ◉ 5 weeks paid vacation, new parents 16months
- ◉ Lay-off (not devastating for Sweden)
  - ◉ Result-citizens live longer!



## UNITED STATES VS. OTHER COUNTRIES

- ◎ \$2 trillion dollars a year on overall health
- ◎ 28<sup>th</sup> in life expectancy
- ◎ 29<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality
- ◎ Chronic illnesses cost businesses in the U.S. \$1 trillion a year in lost productivity

# WHAT CAN WE DO TO ASSIST FAMILIES SUFFERING FROM TOXIC STRESS?

Table exercise

# FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS!

## ○ Biodevelopmental Framework

- Early experiences pave the way for healthy development-HV assist parents in understanding the importance of early childhood development
- Help parents recognize bio-hazards such as lead, mercury, insecticides, etc. lead to unhealthy development
- Environment and physicality-green space to play-positive experiences that promote growth

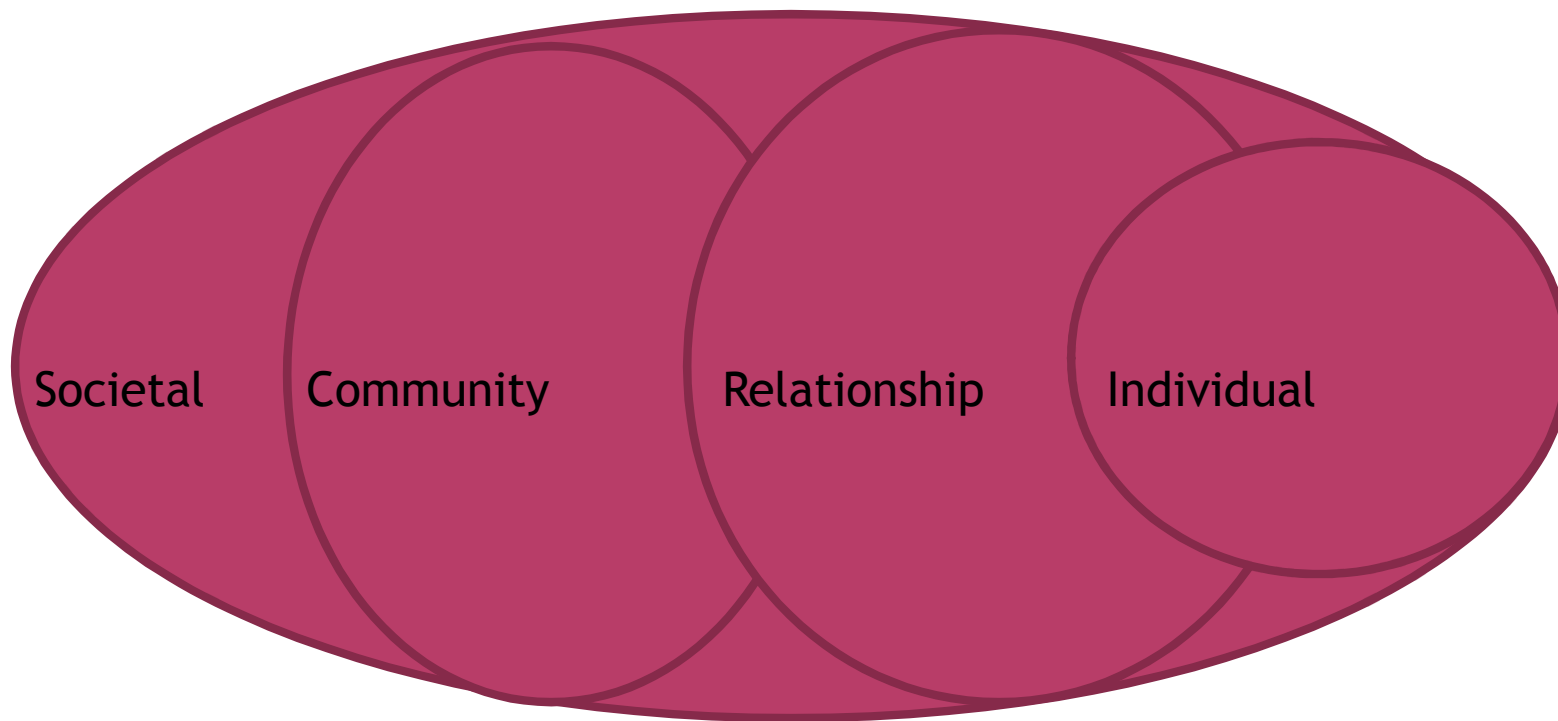
# FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS!

## ○ Biodevelopmental Framework

- Nutrition, Nature and nurture
- Need for safe and secure environments-promote healthy growth and reduce adverse childhood outcomes that lead to Toxic stress



# SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL APPROACH



# SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

## Individual strategies

- ◉ Parent education
- ◉ Child education
- ◉ Screening (T-ACE)  
and referral to TX

## Relationship strategies

- ◉ Parent/Child centers
- ◉ HOME VISITATION

## Data/secure resources

## Home visitation

- ◉ Prenatal development
- ◉ Infant care
- ◉ Child development
- ◉ Problem-solving skills
- ◉ Building supports
- ◉ Cultivating  
relationships
- ◉ Providing referrals

## WHAT WE ALL MUST DO!

- ⦿ Raise public awareness about the effects of Toxic stress
- ⦿ Share our knowledge
- ⦿ Be aware of racial disparities, don't shy away
- ⦿ Advocate for the health and well being of all



## REFERENCES

- ◉ **“The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan”**-US Dept. of Health and Human Services; Center for Disease Control
- ◉ **Biodevelopmental Framework**-Center on the Developing Child Harvard University
- ◉ **“Toxic stress derails development”** video-Center on the Developing Child Harvard University
- ◉ **“Hard Times”** video on the homeless; 60 minutes documentary
- ◉ **“UNNatural Causes”..is inequality making us sick?**-California Newsreel 2008